

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

E. The Appointment of the Twelve Apostles and Teaching on the Mount

13. Teaching on the Mount, Part XII:

Jesus Warns About Two Different Paths, With Different Outcomes

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #079

Base Text: MT 7.13-23 (Parallel Text: LK 6.43-46)

13 *I command you to enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that is leading to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that is leading to life, and only a few find it.*

15 *I Command you to continually watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruit. ^LEach tree is known by its own fruit. ^{MT}Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

^L*The good man brings good things out of the good that is stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings fourth evil things out of the evil that is stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks out of the overflow of what is the heart.*

"Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and do not obey what I say? 21 ^{MT}Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who is doing the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will speak out to them, 'I never knew you. Stay away from me, you evildoers!'*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

| | CONTEXT DIGEST |
|---------------------|---|
| Location | On a Mountain in Galilee |
| Timeline | May, 31 AD (Month Sixteen) |
| Jesus' Life Context | Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry |
| | E. The Appointment of the Twelve Apostles and "Teaching on the Mount" |
| Title | 13. Teaching on the Mount, Part XII Jesus Warns About Two Different Paths, With Two different Outcomes |

COMMENT:

Jesus' third and final warning in his "Teaching on the Mount" was the most basic, and therefore the most important of the commands that closed his teaching session. The Lord gave the command to **"enter"** the path of following him. This reminds us that while Jesus was speaking primarily to his disciples in this extended teaching

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session the huge crowd was also listening in, so Jesus was addressing them as well. This command called for his listeners to make an irreversible commitment to follow him by faith.

The command to **"enter through the narrow gate"** referred to Jesus himself, and his gospel teachings. The way to destruction is broad indeed, for it includes every opinion and point of view other than God's. Everyone on the road to destruction is committed following their own opinions, or those of someone other than Jesus. A disciple, on the other hand, chooses to follow Jesus as their sole Lord, Savior, and Teacher. This gate and path is narrow, for it is limited to Jesus alone. *"Entering"* a gate to an extended path speaks of a decision to commit ourselves to an ongoing process. This was a call to lifetime commitment.

Because Jesus alone is the narrow path, the commitment to begin following him includes the need to avoid the many influences of the "broad" path. False prophets are a powerful source of influence in the world. Prophets by nature speak according to some kind of "revelation" of truth, with a unique authority that comes from that so-called truth. There is something inherently fear-inducing about rejecting the words of even a self-proclaimed, false prophet. What if they were a real prophet? Every prophetic voice that does not echo the teachings of Jesus is false, for Jesus alone is the narrow path we seek to follow.

Jesus gave a test for examining the claims of any prophet. This does not involve judging them, for we leave their actual spiritual condition and eternal disposition to Jesus. However, Jesus himself commanded us to look for "fruit" before accepting any prophetic voice. The fruit is likeness to Christ, especially his unconditional, self-giving love. There is no self-seeking in a true prophet of God—only white-hot passion for Jesus to be glorified. This attitude will exude from real prophets in every financial, relational, communicative, and behavioral expression of their lives. John the Immerser was a great example of the humility and Christ-centeredness of a true prophet.

Most of us pay far too much attention to prophets or teachers other than Jesus. Think of how many hours the average Christian spends listening to their pastor at church, sources of information such as news, music, and entertainment compared to seeing and hearing Jesus in his Word every day. Christians should all be experts on the life and teachings of Jesus. We have a limited, knowable amount of information about him in the Scriptures. We should give our ourselves to getting to Jesus in his Word intimately—better than any other subject or topic in our lives. When we are focused on Jesus the difference between him, and false prophets will be rather obvious to us.

Jesus also warned about enough powerful influence on the road to destruction; name-only Christians. Jesus made it clear that that "many" people will say "Lord, Lord" to him, or claim to act or speak in his name, who have not entered through the narrow gate at all. Calling yourself a christian does not make you one, any more than calling yourself a skunk makes you a skunk. Saying or sing "Lord" regarding Jesus does not mean that you actually believe that he IS Lord. What action appropriately expressed our professed faith in Jesus as Lord? Obedience.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who is doing the will of my Father in heaven."

This does not mean we attempt to earn salvation through our efforts to obey Jesus. It does mean that when the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and minds to unveil the truths of Scripture (the gospel) to us about Jesus, we become convinced that he is LORD and God in exactly the same way that the Father is LORD and God. We believe he IS LORD, because he created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. He commands and controls the universe—he is that powerful and his word is that effective.

When we truly believe these things about Jesus and commit ourselves to following him, we know full well that we do so as his obedient servant and hungry learner. We are committed to obedience because we believe it is his will to empower and enable our obedience, so that we can become like him. It is not that we trust in our own ability to obey Jesus. Rather, we are convinced that we are sinful and unable to obey Jesus at all in our own strength. At the same time, we believe that HE is the God of all things, and nothing is impossible for him, including his ability to enable our obedience as we trust him and commit ourselves to learning to follow him in everything.

True disciples do not believe that their obedience earns their salvation. Christians believe Jesus is the Savior who obtained our salvation through his own saving work in our behalf. We believe we are loved unconditionally.

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Therefore, it is our desire to respond to God's love and grace in Jesus by loving him back in obedience. Doing God's will is our best means of expressing our gratitude and appreciation to Jesus as the "LORD who saves us."

There are many people in the world who call themselves Christians, and talk about Jesus--maybe even to him,--who have no intention of really following him. Like false prophets, name-only Christians are a terrible influence upon christians and non-christians alike. They are willfully heading toward destruction, yet they talk as if they are on the narrow path. Like false prophets, we will recognize false christians by their fruit, or the lack of it. They will not be like Jesus in attitudes, values, or life-style.

False prophets and false christians are striding down the broad road that leads to destruction. All of them. Lots of them. It is therefore essential that each person who hears the good news of Jesus make the irreversible decision to enter the narrow gate of faith-commitment to Jesus, and follow him forever on the narrow path of his will. When we do so, we find that there is a paradox between the wide and narrow gates/paths.

The broad road to destruction begins with every opinion other than Jesus, and there are lots of them. However, as a person continues down the broad road they will discover that many of the opinions they start out with are actually false, and unreliable. Bad advice abounds on that highway. The further a person goes down the road to destruction, the narrower and more constraining it will become, until it ends in eternal death and darkness. Everyone on the "broad" road ends up at the same dark, deadly destination. It was not a broad road at all in the end.

On the other hand, disciples who decide to enter the narrow gate that is Jesus alone, find that the more they follow him, the more they come to experience his infinite fullness as God. What starts as a narrow road opens up into unlimited resources, glory, perfection and beauty. It turns out the "narrow" road is infinitely abundant in the end, because Jesus lovingly shares everything he has with us as his joint-heir.

APPLICATION:

Have you entered the "narrow gate" of irreversible faith-commitment to Jesus? If not, he was speaking to you when he spoke these words in his "Teaching on the Mount." It was his intention for his words to reach you, and they did.

What is keeping you from placing your faith in Jesus in an irreversible, life-commitment? Is it really worth future destruction to reject Jesus now?

If you have already entered the narrow gate, are you seeking to know Jesus, and become like him as the unrivaled priority of your life?

Are you allowing the influence of people on the road to destruction slow down your own advance along the narrow path of obedience?

What can you do to more fully obey Jesus today--just because you love him?